

# IS ANYONE LISTENING WHO CARES ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR YOUR CHILDREN?

To whom it may concern:

This is my story and my DILEMMA. I am recently new to the role of being a Director at a non profit child care center. I have maneuvered my way throughout this field over the course of 20 years starting as a Teacher's Aide/ kitchen aide. I started this "job" when I was 20 years old as a way to help pay for college. I realized quickly that I loved it. I believe I made around \$5.00 an hour which wasn't horrible as I still lived with my Parents. Life moves on and moves quickly. I thought it was time to move out of my Parents home and be an adult, getting my first apartment with my then fiancée now husband in 1996. I asked for and received a full time Teacher's aide position with the same not for profit I had done kitchen work in. I was then bumped to \$6.00 an hour. This was amazing to me a full time job with benefits. Then the reality hit that the benefits didn't pay the rent so I dropped out of college and got a 2<sup>nd</sup> job. My work day started at 9 every morning and ended around 12 at night. I worked tirelessly and ran myself into the ground. Good thing I had those benefits because I was always sick, and never called into work. I married my husband in 1998 and found a nice home to purchase, yes I realize this is something that most Americans do not achieve in fact most childcare workers will never achieve, but thanks to the generosity of family we were able to put a down payment on a small fixer upper. I was at that point over the moon making a whopping \$9.50 an hour. I found out I was pregnant with my first child in 2001 and by October of that year we had a beautiful, glorious, blessing THAT WAS AMAZINGLY EXPENSIVE. The year my son was born Care 4 Kids had been stopped. With credit card debt mounting, bills to pay and the mortgage due we just scraped by many weeks only eating cereal for food so that we made sure our son had formula. I decided to go back to school so I could make more money. I first tried the CNA route, but that was not my passion early childhood was. I went back to earn my AS in ECE. My son went to day care 2 days a week with a family member taking care of him the other days. I could not find a child care center in my town that had a sliding fee scale for infants and toddlers. In 2004 we discovered we were pregnant again. This time with twins, who were amazing little miracles that WERE DOUBLY EXPENSIVE! I have gotten a lot of slack on the internet when I was quoted in the news junkie as to the struggles of working for little money. A man named Lance suggested that I put my children up for adoption, or euthanize them. Yes there were people saying this, please feel free to look it up CT News Junkie June 18, 2009. I was so hurt and disgusted by this post I never spoke again about my wages, or the struggles of raising young children in this ME society. The truth is those children are the best thing that I have ever created, and I could just barely afford them because my career path was in ECE. I received my BA degree and worked up to my current position. I loved teaching and often miss it but now I must speak for those who still teach. That is my story and now here is my dilemma.

What does my story say about the working wages in ECE? Does it say that we are scamming the system? No we would all like to NOT be on Care4kids or WIC. Does it say we are lazy? Certainly not since many of us are going to school working full time jobs and raising our children. Here is what it says. The people who do the most important JOBS are child care providers. We teach the children from 6 weeks through elementary school, we care for them, protect them, and love them like they are our own. These are the people that many of you drop your children off (so you can get to your important job) in the morning and expect them to care for your BABIES as you would. Yet in the same breathe these are the people we pay minimum wage and expect them to get a BS degree in ECE with an early childhood teaching credential. The Teachers here could easily find a better paying job at Walmart now with their wage increase or TJ Maxx an Gap who is following suit, but many have AS degrees in ECE and or are working on their BA degrees because THIS IS THEIR PASSION. They are the human side of child care, they are the people who love the children when their parents can not be there, they are the ones who kiss their boo boos and make it better, they are the ones who sing them to sleep, they are ALWAYS THERE FOR THE CHILDREN. Is there anyone listening I wonder. Now With the many budget cuts I fear that the children of the town will not receive the quality education and care they deserve as I may need to make serious budget cuts at the center. I should be telling these wonderful Teachers they are getting a substantial raise instead I may be giving them their pink slip. Only two words come to mind, DEVASTATING and DISGUSTING!!!!

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